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ABSTRACT

It is suggested that controversy concerning faculty productivity assessment and development is an outcome of different conceptions or frames of reference: the romanticist is far more likely to perceive and relate to the social aspects, while the classicist is much more aware of and attuned to the technical aspects. Factors affecting productivity assessment and development can be clarified using a 10 by 9 matrix. Factors under the social, as opposed to the technical, dimension involve: (1) published assessment or "merit" guidelines of institutions/systems; (2) what is really done and how decisions are really made; (3) relationship of numbers 1 and 2; (4) perceptions of "ideal load;" (5) perceptions of productivity ("real load"); (6) relationship of numbers 4 and 5; (7) the tendency of a profession to remain in its present state; (8) morale of the individual and group; (9) degree of willingness/readiness of persons to be assessed or to evaluate others and (10) degree of usage of faculty development resources. Technical aspects of the matrix involve: model evaluation and/or development procedures; load as measured by student contact hours, research duties, and other responsibilities; effect as measured by student knowledge gained, etc.; inherent variation in characteristics of the setting as determined by kind of personnel, materials, etc., as required by the uniqueness of the disciplines; inherent variation in characteristics of the setting due to the type of setting (e.g., location); measurement characteristics as determined by the nature of the task; error of measurement inherent in the assessment procedures; availability of faculty development resources; and degree of preparation of the assessors, those assessed, and the decisionmakers. (SW)

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The recently more insistent and intense calls for greater effectiveness, or at least more precise measurement of effort in higher education, have generated widespread interest in faculty productivity. As charges fly this way and that, the verbiage about how to make higher education cost-effective has quite naturally focused upon the largest portion of the institution's budget: "Instructional personnel: salaries." Regrettably this increased discourse has revealed little more than imponderable adversaries struggling on a battleground of conceptual quicksand surrounded by a jungle of dense jargon. There is not space enough here to unravel all the words which ensnare the strugglers, so the vernacular, used consistently and with some precision, will have to do for describing the warriors and the causes of their "sinking spells." The remainder of this piece is dedicated to describing a basic dilemma in both the adversaries and the battleground in more specific terms.

The Adversaries

Customarily the adversaries have been perceived as "administrators versus faculty," "faculty versus the board of

regents" or "faculty versus tax payers." This may in fact be the case but it is not the problem. A real block to progress in faculty assessment are those persons both within and among these and other reference groups who see reality quite differently and are unaware they differ. They are looking at the same things,yet seeing something quite different, while unable to articulate the differences. Thus it is quite possible that two administrators, for example, may be saying the same thing with the same jargon but in reality are far apart in perception while thinking along dramatically different lines about faculty productivity. Tragically, there is no meeting of the minds as these people do not even know there are differences between them.

To better perceive the real adversaries engaged in this polemic struggle both Pirsig (1974) and Witkin (1977) offer insight. According to Pirsig, a useful frame of reference for bringing order to the world from apparent chaotic activity is the "classical-romantic" dichotomy. While originally stated by ancient philosophers, Pirsig's contemporary prose rings true in drawing the distinctions between the classicist and the romanticist. The classicists admire the rationality of technology along with the underlying form and evident precision engendered by technical or technological solutions. On the other hand, Pirsig argues, the romanticists value the immediate appearance of things through primarily intuitive, imaginative, creative and inspirational means--the feeling

inspired by the apparent. Pirsig, using the basically introspective rhetoric of a romanticist, suggests that this duality in styles of thinking, feeling and doing pose an age-old dilemma. People tend to think characteristically "in one mode or the other and in so doing tend to misunderstand and underestimate what the other mode is all about. But no one is willing to give up the truth as he sees it, and as far as I know, no one now living has any real reconciliation of these visions of reality are unified" (Pirsig, pp. 74-75).

Witkin, using the technologist's experimental research approach, tends to restate the same percept: people customarily process their sensory input to deal with their real world somewhere along a continuum with two distinct polarities. The "field independent" person, on one end using Witkin's words, "perceives part of the field as discrete from the surrounding field as a whole, rather than embedded in the field . . . perceives analytically" (Witkin, pp. 6-7). At the other pole is the "field dependent" person whose mode of perception is "strongly dominated by the prevailing field" (Witkin, p. 7). Clearly a social orientation which notes social cues and activities identifies these field dependent individuals. Witkin is quick to declare that there are all degrees of these two distinct types of perceivers.

There are more than chance similarities between Pirsig's romanticist and Witkin's field dependent person. Pirsig's classicist has many of the characteristics Witkin would describe as earmarks of field independence. With these two "ideal types," the classicist with a field independent cognitive

style (technical/analytical) and the romanticist who is largely field dependent (social/global), now more ponderable as the adversaries, it is opportune to describe the battleground. If the reader is unfulfilled in understanding the adversaries, a reading of the two seminal works cited will aid greatly.

The Battleground

The following brief description of the battleground is presented to array the quicksand so that it has more substance. Each person brings with him to the field of combat his own preconceptions and biases, the binoculars for viewing and screening the realities there. It would seem only natural then that the battleground takes on the characteristics of the adversaries. And thus it is so: the same "technical" and "social" descriptors are present. An underlying assumption of this conceptualization is that assessment of faculty productivity is essentially a social phenomenon. It is further assumed that those engaged in this largely social acitivity seek technical solutions to the problems which arise when carrying out the task. Viewed thusly there is something for everyone in it if Pirsig's and Witkin's descriptions of the real world are correct. But this also gives rise to the aforementioned dilemma, for each is seeing the problem naturally but predominately from one viewpoint or the other, his own. The romanticist comes to the arena far more likely to perceive and relate to the social aspects, while the classicist is much more aware of and attuned to

the technical aspects of faculty productivity assessment and development. In order to resolve this difficulty the battleground needs to be perceived as a 10 X 9 matrix (See Figure 1 below) with ten social and nine technical dimensions.

Major Factors Affecting Faculty Productivity Assessment and Development	Technical								
	A. Model (State-of-the-art) procedures	B. "Load" as measured conventionally	C. "Effect" produced by faculty	D. Inherent variation: uniqueness of discipl	E. Inherent variation: ind. of the setting	F. Measurement characteristics of task	G. Error of measurmt. random/constant	H. Availability of faculty develp. res.	I. Degree of preparation/expertise
Social									
1. Policy and guidelines Univ									
2. What is done at University									
3. Relationship of 1. to 2.									
4. Perceptions of "ideal"load									
5. Perceptions of "real" load									
6. Relationship of 4. to 5.									
7. Tendency to remain static									
8. Morale									
9. Predisposition to assess.									
10. Usage of develp. resourc.									

Figure 1

All must fight the battle from both social and technical viewpoints, standing on common ground; thus, both dimensions are present anywhere on the field of battle. The socially oriented are on common ground with the technically oriented. There is meshing if not congruence: A "point at which visions of reality are unified" (Pirsig, p. 75).

The basic Geneva Convention rule in effect during the struggle is that each area of the battleground must be identified at the time it is being discussed or analyzed. For example, a faculty salary committee member, obviously of romantic leanings, may ask, "What is the 'ideal' load (Figure 1, row 4) for a faculty member in that department?" This is not good enough. Another faculty member with classicist tendencies will need to respond, "In what sense? As measured conventionally (Cell 4B)? By the effect produced (Cell 4C)? Which?" Such required specification will tend to tighten up the discussion and at the same time acknowledge the vast and disparate underfooting. Of course such specification will not invariably lead to a viable answer due to the primitive state of the art and science of faculty productivity assessment. The likelihood that an appropriate solution will be generated is greatly increased by the added precision, however.

And now for a more detailed view of the topology of the battleground. Consider now the elements of the matrix titled: "Major Factors Affecting Productivity Assessment

and Development," with the column at the left headed "Social" above these ten row descriptors:

1. Expectations, criteria and procedures for determining productivity and/or development as stated by official university policy and guidelines. Published assessment or "merit" guidelines of institutions/systems.

2. Expectations, criteria and procedures for determining productivity and/or development as followed by evaluators and decision makers. What is really done? How are the decisions really made?

3. Relationship of 1 to 2.

4. Perceptions of "ideal load" as held by professors, administrators, informed publics, critics of higher education, etc.

5. Perceptions of productivity ("real load") as held by professors, administrators, informed publics, critics of higher education, etc.

6. Relationship of 4 to 5.

7. The tendency of a profession to remain in its present state, particularly as this homeostatic characteristic affects productivity. Unionism, old school ties, etc.

8. Morale of the:

   a. individual, and,

   b. group

singly and together as "a." and "b." govern productivity.

9. Degree of willingness/readiness of those persons being assessed to be assessed, and evaluators and decision

makers to evaluate and decide.

10. Degree of usage of faculty development resources.

Next consider these column descriptors across the top row of the matrix with these nine aspects titled, "Technical":

A. "Model" evaluation and/or development procedures: the state of the art.

B. Load as measured conventionally. Student contact hours, number of preparations, research duties, administative responsibilities, community service, student advisement, committee assignments, etc., through self-report activity logs, archival records, etc.

C. Effect as measured by student knowledge gained, doctoral students graduated, student behavior changed, enthusiasm of buyers of product (student) talent, extra-university demand for professional services, etc. Cost-benefit analysis.

D. Inherent variation in characteristics of the setting as determined by kind of personnel, facilities, materials, etc., as required by the uniqueness of the disciplines, e.g., art as differentiated from microbiology.

E. Inherent variation in characteristics of the setting due to the individuality of the setting, for example, a specific urban community college in the northeast and a rural one in the southwest.

F. Measurement characteristics as determined by the nature of the task, e.g., comparing human performance in such various but specific technical settings as classrooms with different color characteristics.

G. Error of measurement inherent in the assessment procedures:

a. random

b. constant

H. Availability of faculty development resources.

I. Degree of preparation/expertise of the assessors, those assessed, and the decision makers.

Other aspects of faculty productivity assessment may be listed on either axis of the matrix as additional elements are identified. This then, is the battleground.

So now both the adversaries and the battleground have been described. If the surrounding semantic entanglements were not too many, perhaps a degree of order, or at least clarity, has been brought to the field of faculty productivity assessment and development. It will be left to others to disentangle the adversaries from any surrounding semantic jungle so that the professionals who teach in higher education can get on with the vital task of assessing their productivity and means to it both individually and collectively. May the quality of this effort be raised to a level consistent with the quality of higher education in the United States, with the discussants displaying heightened understanding of the adversaries, knowledge of the conceptual quagmire, and sensitivity to the semantic entanglements present.

A dilemma has been spelled out.

Reference Notes

1. Fearing, Joseph L. Aspects of Faculty Productivity Assessment (Working paper for Texas Association of College Teachers, Committee on Faculty Productivity). Unpublished manuscript, Texas Woman's University, 1974.

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